(iv) E-filing of Patent applications has been made operational with effect from 20th July, 2007.

(v) Seminars/Conferences/Workshops at national and international level have been organized for creating awareness and promotion of Intellectual Property Rights.

(vi) Memoranda of Understanding have been signed between India and Australia, European Patent Office, France, Germany, Japan, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and United States of America for cooperation in the field of Intellectual Property Rights.

(vii) To further strengthen and upgrade the Intellectual Property Offices, the Government has launched a scheme in the Eleventh Five Year Plan for Modernisation and Strengthening of Intellectual Property Offices at an estimated cost of Rs.300 crore.

(viii) The measures taken by the Government enabled the Indian Patent Office to be recognised as an International Searching Authority and International Preliminary Examining Authority under the Patent Cooperation Treaty of World Intellectual Property Organisation and a possible accession to the Madrid Protocol for the international registration of Marks.

**Exporters opting for Export Credit Guarantee Scheme**

485. SHRI VIJAY JAWAHARLAL DARDA:
SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that our exporters are opting for the Export Credit Guarantee Scheme to minimize their losses due to unforeseen circumstances;

(b) whether any shortcomings have been found in operation of ECG scheme during the last five years; and

(c) if so, the percentage of exporters opting for ECG, especially in the case of small and medium exporters?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) As on 31.03.2008, 20568 exporters were availing insurance cover of the Corporation either under the policy issued to them or through the covers issued to commercial banks. More than 80% of these exports were small and medium exporters.

**Free trade agreement with ASEAN**

486. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has finally concluded a free trade agreement with ASEAN;

(b) if so, the terms of the agreement; and

(c) the steps taken and being taken in pursuance thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Does not arise.